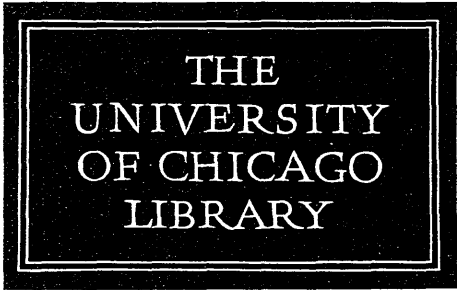


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INCREASE OF FAITH NECESSARY TO THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIAN
MISSIONS.

A
S E R M O N,

*Delivered before the Board of Managers of the Baptist General
Convention.*

AT THEIR

A N N U A L M E E T I N G .

1834.

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S E R M O N,

DELIVERED

BEFORE THE BOARD OF MANAGERS

OF THE

BAPTIST GENERAL CONVENTION,

AT THEIR

ANNUAL MEETING,

HELD IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK, APRIL 30, 1834.

BY WILLIAM R. WILLIAMS,
PASTOR OF THE AMITY ST. BAPTIST CHURCH, N. Y.

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"—BUT HAVING HOPE, WHEN YOUR FAITH IS INCREASED, THAT WE SHALL BE ENLARGED BY YOU ACCORDING TO OUR RULE ABUNDANTLY, TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN THE REGIONS BEYOND YOU."—2 Corinthians, x. 15, 16.

THE language of the Apostle evidently implies a gentle reprehension of the Corinthian church. The poverty and imbecility of their faith embarrassed him in his ardent aspirations after more extended usefulness. He was anxious to enter upon a new field, and to proclaim the Gospel throughout other and more destitute regions. But he must await in prayerful hope the increase of their faith, and at their hands expect an enlargement. This enlargement might be, on their part, an advancement and confirmation in Christian doctrine, which should permit him to transfer the charge of these, his children in the faith, into the hands of less skilful pastors; or a rapid growth in Christian holiness, which should justify the Apostle in presenting them as his epistle, to be seen and read of all men, attesting alike the power of the Gospel, and the reality of his mission. Or he might desire the vindication of his own apostolical character, which had been cruelly assailed in their midst, and ask the transmission of his name, with its well-won honors, to the neighboring heathen. Or it had been, perhaps, his hope, from their liberality and wealth, to have received aid

in his missionary journeyings; or he had anticipated their position in a great commercial metropolis, assisting in sending the Gospel to other havens and cities of the empire. Whether he expected from their increased and matured piety any one, or the union of all these advantages, and what would be the decision as to the mode in which enlargement was sought by him, one fact stands forth on the face of these various considerations, manifest and unquestionable. He was now fettered in his plans of benevolence, and it was from the Corinthian disaffection that he expected his release. Either from their confirmation of the truths he preached, or in the holiness he enjoined and exemplified; or from their assertion of his just honors as an apostle; from the bestowment of their free alms, or the employment of their mercantile influence, he hoped to obtain the removal of the restraint from himself, and to secure for his pagan neighbors blessings untold and priceless. The fulfillment of his hope depended upon their progress to higher attainments in faith. There is involved then in these considerations of an inspired and most successful missionary, a principle which we would this evening endeavor to bring before you, that

THE MISSIONARIES OF THE CHURCH REQUIRE AT ALL TIMES, FOR THE EXTENSION AND SUCCESS OF THEIR LABORS, AN INCREASE OF FAITH.

Looking to the divisions and scandals he had so sternly rebuked, and to the peculiar temptations of the infant church which had been gathered amid the luxury, gaiety, and dissipation of the licentious Corinth, we might have expected that one versed as was Paul in the weakness of our nature, and the wiles of its great adversary, that he would have chosen to specify, instead of the one evil of unbelief, other and more numerous impediments to his success. And using the term employed by him, as we too often do, to describe a know-

merely speculative and theoretical, we should have supposed that in a community indoctrinated by the personal labors of an apostle, as well as in the churches of our own age and land, the deficiencies of Christians were to be sought, rather in their works of obedience, than in the amount of their faith. Yet such was not the fact then. Such is not the root of the evil now. It is in faith that we are wanting. The elder and parent grace is maimed and infirm, and the whole family and sisterhood of the Christian virtues languish as she decays, and can be reanimated only by her restoration. Having considered, therefore,

I. THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF TRUE FAITH,

II. THE INTIMATE CONNEXION BETWEEN ITS HIGHER DEGREES AND THE MISSIONARY EFFORTS OF THE CHURCH will naturally follow and prepare us to examine,

III. THE DEFECTIVE FAITH OF OUR OWN CHURCHES, AS INTERPOSING A HINDRANCE TO THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL OVER HEATHENISM.

And may the Father of lights, by His own Spirit of illumination and power, unfold to the mind, and impress upon the heart, the humbling but the salutary truth contained in these words.

I. The *importance* of faith may be discerned from the dignity and rank assigned it throughout the New Testament. In the commencement and at the close of our Saviour's ministry; in his own private conference with the anxious, but irresolute Nicodemus, and in the public message with which his apostles were charged, as he sent them forth to the evangelization of the world, it is alike represented as the only mode—the one condition of salvation. He that exercises it is not condemned, while he that believeth not shall be damned. To this prin-

ciple is ascribed our immunity from the terrors of the law, for we are justified by faith. As a shield, it repels the fiery darts of temptation that come from the great adversary of God and man; while within, it purifies the heart, working by love; and, in our contest with the ungodly precepts and example of our fellow men, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The long and glorious list of its strifes and its trophies, contained in the closing portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews, commences with the announcement that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; and is terminated with the triumphant recapitulation that all these, the worthies of the earlier dispensations, obtained their good report through the same simple, but mighty principle—that of faith.

And although the world are accustomed to dispute the necessity of this principle, when exercised respecting the realities of a world as yet hidden and invisible, they are perpetually employing it with regard to the visible but transient scenery of the present life. Compelled to give their faith to testimony as to those things which might be seen, and often giving it even where they might substitute personal observation for faith in the evidence of others; they refuse to extend it to those objects which, from their very nature, cannot become the subjects of immediate vision and examination. Yielding credence to the testimony of their fellow-mortals, though the witnesses are alike fallible and perfidious, they refuse it to the revelation of their God. Preferring to give it where it is often not required, (did they choose to employ their own natural faculties,) they withhold it where it is inevitably necessary. All the commerce of this world is predicated on the faith which man puts in the skill, integrity, and diligence of his fellow-man; and a writing, of which he never saw the author, shall be to him a sufficient warrant for transmitting, far beyond

his own sight and control, his whole property. By the exercise of a just and sober faith in the testimony brought into her halls, the national jurisprudence administers to our citizens the redress of their wrongs, and the punishment of their crimes. The learning dispensed in our colleges is, by the mass of minds, received without personal examination, upon the credit given to the ability and honesty of previous investigators. And all education, whether in the most recondite science, or in the most humble and handicraft art, proceeds upon the faith which the pupil is required to exercise in the superior skill of his instructor, and in the value of the knowledge his teacher is preparing to communicate.

It is only by the confidence they have learned to place in the narratives of the traveller, that the majority of society know the nature and extent of the country, of which they are themselves the inhabitants; or that they can form any idea of the great and magnificent cities, the goodly prospects, and the splendid wonders that adorn some foreign and unseen coast. And with regard to the facts which we have thus gathered, we feel no suspicion, but use them as the current coin of the mind, both in our private meditations and our social intercourse, without fear as to their genuineness and validity. Even the sceptic, loud and boisterous in his rejection of all faith, as being an invasion of the province, and but an usurpation upon the rights of human reason, is most rigid and constant in exacting from his trembling child an obedience to his will, and a subjection to his opinions, which can rest only upon the faith, the tacit but implicit faith, which he requires his family to exercise in his superior wisdom and larger experience.

And if it be objected, that the faith of the gospel differs widely from that which we so readily and commonly render, in that it brings to our minds deep and difficult mysteries, we answer that it would be less evidently the work of God,

if it did not come, contradicting the first and rasher conclusions of human ignorance. It would be a departure from the analogy which exists among all the works of our God, did it only reveal what man had previously conjectured, and were Faith employed merely to endorse and register, in silent acquiescence, the rescripts which had been prepared for her by human reason. And even in the sciences of this world, narrow and near as is the field of their labors, there are the same inscrutable yet inevitable difficulties, of which the sceptic complains in religion. We expect it of a cultivated and advanced science, that it should assail and overturn many opinions, which to the first glance of ignorant presumption seem indisputable truths. Contradicting the first and incomplete testimony of our senses and the general impressions of mankind, Geography comes back from her voyages of discovery with the annunciation that the earth is not an extended plain, but one vast sphere. And though the eye sees no motion, and the foot feels no unsteadiness, and no jarring is perceived within or around us, Astronomy comes back to the inquirer with the startling assurance, that, notwithstanding all these seeming evidences to the contrary, the earth on which he reposes is ceaselessly and most rapidly whirling along its trackless path in the heavens; and that, moment by moment, he is borne along through the fields of space with a fearful and inconceivable velocity. And when, from further wanderings, but on better testimony,—when from a higher and stranger world, but with fuller evidence and with more indubitable tokens of her veracity, Faith comes back, bringing assurances that tally not in all things with our preconceived conjectures, shall she be chidden and blasphemed for the difficulties that arise from our own ignorance? Without the mysteries of the Gospel, revelation would be unlike all the other pro-

vinces of human knowledge, and the domains of Faith would be dissimilar from all the rest of the handiwork of God.

But although the importance of faith is thus apparent from the rank assigned it in the scriptures, and from its necessity even in the petty concerns of this present life, we shall learn to appreciate true belief yet more highly, when we see mankind, by a heedless but perpetual infatuation, allowing themselves in errors the most absurd and dangerous, with regard to its character and claims. By some it is confounded with a blind and irrational credulity, although evangelical faith is based only on evidence the most satisfactory and sufficient; and although the book of God, when demanding our credence, proffers to the inquirer testimony, not merely abundant, but overwhelming, as to the nature of its authorship. It is as adverse to the character of scriptural faith to believe without a divine warrant, upon authority that is merely traditional and human, as to refuse the assent of the soul where God has spoken. True Faith is not more allied to superstition than she is to scepticism; and, determined as he is to believe all that God has testified, the Christian, wherever the oracle is silent, suspends his decision, and anxiously excludes from his creed all the inventions of man, whether they come from the school, the synod, or the council.

Others delight to speak of faith in the religion of our Lord, as if it were but an opinion, and the religion it embraces but a hypothesis, of little practical moment or influence; while, on the contrary, the faith of the Gospel is as rigid and experimental in its character as the strictest science of the schools. It makes no arbitrary assumptions, rests on no disputed axioms, but, upon the foundation of facts of the most impressive and varied character, it builds up, patiently and surely, its doctrines and its precepts; invites the most searching scrutiny into the testimonials which it adduces; and having by them

established its first principles, gives not only for its fundamental axioms, but for its every inference, and for each subsequent deduction, the word of a God. As well might we call arithmetic or history a mere theory, as to apply that title to the religion which is embraced by our faith. Do the self-satisfied philosophers of this world tell us of the necessity of facts? We answer, the incarnation, the personal character, the crucifixion and resurrection of the Saviour, are facts most fully proved, and standing alone, would be in themselves sufficient to prove the divinity of the revelation that is entwined about them, and of which they constitute the central supports, the chief and favorite theme. And every convert, ransomed by the power of this faith from the tyranny of evil habits, affords in himself a new fact, augmenting the mass of her evidences, and swelling her far-spreading and splendid "cloud of witnesses."

Nor are those men safer or wiser than the undisguised scoffer, who, professing to receive the religion of the Bible, flatter themselves that a mere assent of the understanding to the historical portions of the record, constitutes that faith which shall justify at the bar, and admit them to the heaven of JEHOVAH. The Bible is to be regarded as a whole, and as such is to be received and obeyed. The Gospel is a code of laws, no less than a volume of annals. It has not only narratives, but precepts, and asks the consent of the whole man, and his entire soul, to its undivided and unmutilated contents. And as that man could not maintain his arrogant pretensions, who should claim the honors of devoted patriotism merely because he had studied intently the annals of his country's history, whilst he was trampling upon her laws, and imprinting every leaf of her statute-book with the hoof of swinish indulgence, thus must the man fail of sustaining his claim to the character of Christ's disciple, who, professing to credit and revere his record, treads down into the mire his laws, and has but the faith of historical

assent for the narrative, without the faith of love for the precepts, and the faith of affectionate conformity for the character of the Saviour. The Bible contains not only the story of our creation, ruin, and recovery, but it includes as well the indictment of our crimes, and the proclamation of our pardon : and there is no true reception of the history, unless there be also, personally, the humble confession of the imputed guiltiness, and the grateful pleading of the proffered discharge.

Equally erroneous, and chargeable with a kindred folly, is the man, who, passing beyond the vain figment of a faith merely historical, professes to receive the whole system of revelation, in its doctrinal, no less than its narrative portions, and triumphing in the orthodoxy of his tenets, seems anxious to shelter himself from the practical influence of faith, by pleading the freeness of the salvation it brings. The whole necessity of salvation grew out of the practical depravity of man's nature, and the whole errand of the Bible was but the restoration of practical holiness. For this end prophets and apostles wrote ; for this it was that a Saviour descended and bled—rose, and reigns, to furnish, to bestow, and to fulfil that Bible. And until this effect be wrought, nothing is gained, and if this be refused, the very object and intention of the religion is rejected. It is surely vain toil to implant in the mind a faith, the vital germ of which is carefully removed, a dead root, which shall never send forth the springing leaf, or bear the ripened fruit.

An error now popular, and not less fatal, is one which the sceptic has borrowed from the armory and champions of the truth. It consists in a perversion of the great scriptural truth, that it is God who worketh in us to will and to do, and that all our thoughts are under his control. Using the theological labors of Edwards for a purpose, which that holy and master mind never intended, the advocates of this dangerous error contend that our belief is beyond our control, that faith is not

voluntary, and unbelief is therefore not criminal: forgetting, that, though a gift of God, faith is withal an act or habit of the human mind; that, like every other virtue, it is on the one hand, a boon of heaven, and on the other, the exercise of unfettered human agency—that it is the natural result of evidence duly and impartially considered, and that no man can be guiltless who wilfully turns away from the contemplation of that evidence. The religion of God asks but a verdict according to the weight of proof which she brings. To prevent the admission of that evidence, or wilfully to pronounce a decision against its weighty and sufficient testimony, would not be deemed guiltless in any cause that should be brought before an earthly tribunal; nor shall it be held a venial offence at the bar, and by the laws of an insulted Deity.

From the errors which human perverseness has invented to obscure the character of faith, we turn to review its true *nature* and *office*. It is most simple, as much so as the confidence of a prattling child in his father's kindness and wisdom; yet at the same time as expansive in its views, as the loftiest science that ever tasked the powers of a created intellect. It is but a hearty assent to the whole testimony of God—a submission of the entire soul, not of the intellect only, but also of the affections and the imagination, to the testimony of God; whether that testimony be employed in prescribing a duty, or in establishing a privilege. It is the acknowledgment of human ignorance, united with the profession of confidence in Divine wisdom, and of subjection to Divine authority. Making no reservations, prescribing no terms of limitation, claiming no power of revoking or abridging its grant, it is a surrender of the intelligent spirit to the word of God as its rule and its stay; in conformity to it as the one standard of human conduct, and in dependance upon it as the only fitting nutriment of the spiritual life. It thus restores again the communication

which at the fall was severed. In his temptation Satan persuaded our parents to discredit the testimony of God; and the consequent interruption of faith was the hewing away of that channel, through which they had heretofore received from their God knowledge, truth, and love. The human mind became at once an exhausted and rifted reservoir, "a broken cistern," into which no longer welled the outgushing streams from "the Fountain of living waters." By faith the communion is restored, and man is again the dependant and pupil of his God.

It is his natural and rightful state, not for this life only, but forever. The apostle, when enumerating the graces that abide, has spoken of faith as if it too continued. Indeed, the very nature of a created and limited intelligence, involves the necessity of continued faith. Long as we are not omnipresent, and cannot perceive with our own eyes what is every where transacted—long as we are not omniscient, and there are portions of knowledge, which we have not yet acquired—long as man is not invested with the attributes of the Deity, so long must we depend upon His testimony for the truth of that, which He has seen and we have not seen; so long must we learn from Him the nature of that which He has known, but which we may know only from his words. The perfection of the heavenly world does not imply illimitable knowledge, either as to the present or the future; and as to all those portions of God's ways, which thus remain concealed from our personal examination, the spirits of just men made perfect, will, with their first born brethren, the angels that have kept their original estate, remain the pensioners of faith, dependant upon the declarations of God for continual instruction.

And how glorious are the objects which faith brings into the mind of man, even during his sojourn here. He learns from her the secret of his own misery and guiltiness, and its remedy. He is told of a law condemning irrevocably for the first

offence, yet now fully satisfied for his hourly infraction of its precepts—a Saviour divine to redeem and human to compassionate—a salvation not of his own procurement—the Spirit of God descended to be his teacher and consoler—troubles sanctified—snares broken—and an eternity of purity and blessedness made his certain inheritance: and are not these truths of surpassing splendor and inestimable worth? They enter into the soul, not so much destroying as bedwarfing its former ideas, and the original furniture of the mind, which it has obtained from the knowledge and literature of this world. Faith has suddenly widened the mental horizon, letting in the vision of realities before present, but hitherto unseen. Or rather, as has been beautifully said, it is the floating into view of another and a lovelier world, with its glories and its harmony drowning the din and beclouding the splendor of these terrestrial scenes.

The believer judges by a new standard; sees by a new and heaven-descended light; and lo, in the change, “all things have become new.” And though the men of this world may question and deride the renovation, because the man’s earthly condition, and the powers of his mind remain apparently the same; it is evident to those who will reason, that the man is essentially renewed; for his views, his feelings, his hopes and fears, his prospects and his purposes, his conduct and language, have undergone a marked and strange modification. True it is, the man’s garb is still coarse, and his person ungainly, and his mind is not graced with the refinements and adornments of education; but the change is as yet merely initial. Death and the resurrection shall consummate it. And even already the internal process is to his own mind alike evident and delightful; and with tears of gratitude he receives it as the earnest of that thorough renovation, which shall transform him, body, soul, and spirit, into the likeness of his Lord. Thus might we imagine

an aged and lonely cottager, musing at nightfall in his desolate home, upon the partner of his bosom, now tenanting the grave, and his children, who have long since wandered from his hearth to a distant land, and are there regardless or ignorant of the sorrows with which his declining years are darkened. And as he cowers over his scanty fire, the unbidden tear will fall, and his heart is full of the bitterness of despair. But enter with the unexpected tidings that his children live; that, prospered and wealthy, they are yet affectionate; that their hearts still yearn towards their early home and the parent who holds it; that they are even now on their way to sooth and gladden his few remaining days: and although you have made no immediate change in the man's lot—although the hovel is yet dark and cold, and the embers emit but the same dull and saddening light; the whole scene is changed to his eyes, and instead of its former desolateness, it has become radiant with the lustre of his new-found happiness. A new element is poured into his mind, and the faith of your message has changed his whole soul. Is there no reality, no enjoyment in this translation from despondency to hope, from comfortless and unpitied helplessness to the glad expectation of attached and watchful children? Yes; let his lot remain long but what it had been, he feels, and you cannot but feel, that the credence given to your tidings has renewed his youth within him, and thrown a new coloring over the whole scene of squalid poverty that surrounds him. And, if you deny not the reality of the happiness because of the absence or present delay of any outward change, should you dispute the reality of the believer's peace, because as yet he is but the expectant heir, and not the joyous possessor, of a heavenly mansion?

Of a principle thus efficient and delightful, what shall secure the preservation and increase? Divine truth is its aliment, and the Holy Spirit its author and upholder. In the language of

scripture it will be observed that the term faith, (as in the instance of the exhortation to contend earnestly for it, as it was once delivered to the saints,) is employed not only in the sense above given, but also to describe a system of doctrines: but it is as the *food* of that spiritual principle which we have endeavored to describe. And as the principle of life, and the mode or means by which it is sustained, may be, and, in common speech, often are confounded; so is the same word used in the New Testament to signify both the truth received, and the temper or habit of mind receiving it. But the two dissimilar ideas are not to be blended; nor are we to suppose that the form of sound doctrine will necessarily ensure a living faith in the heart. The experiment, often and anxiously repeated, has ever failed. Creeds and confessions have been adjusted and balanced with the utmost nicety of discrimination, and with the greatest precision of language. But in the church at Geneva, planted and watered by the cares of Calvin and Beza, and in the English Presbyterians, the descendants of the holy non-conformists, it has been but too fully proved, that correct symbols of faith may be inherited from a pious ancestry and for a time be retained with great reverence, but without any portion of the indwelling spirit which once framed and pervaded them. Indeed, in the history of Protestant Germany, it has been found that the fallen and corrupted fragments of a traditionary "form of sound words," have been most prolific in the production of heresies, alike strange and revolting. The fat and heavy soil of an inert and "dead orthodoxy," was to that national church the hot-bed of scepticism, nurturing errors of the rankest growth, and the most deadly nature. The stubble, which had well sustained the former and the proper harvest, but served to enrich the field for an after growth of weeds the most noxious and luxuriant. However useful in its place, (and, properly employed, its usefulness is great,) the most correct and

scriptural creed is but the outward and inanimate portraiture of an inward and living faith: and it is as idle to expect that confessions and symbols, alone and unaided, should create faith, as to imagine that a definition of honesty and benevolence, rigid and accurate, should of itself be sufficient to reform the inmates of our prisons.

“Leviathan is not so tamed.”

It is not with such weapons that the enemy is to be vanquished, or a living faith perpetuated from age to age. The affections, no less than the intellect, must be reached and won. The continual interposition of the the Holy Spirit, the renewed and personal application of truth to the human conscience, are requisite to attain the end. And it is only from a personal faith, in all her members, thus produced—thus fostered—and continually increasing, that the church can expect prosperity. It is thus that she is to be prepared for conflict with her internal foes, and for the subjugation of new territories to the obedience of the cross. From a faith thus established and made general, what may not be hoped—what conquest shall seem too arduous, and what peril too fearful?

We have seen the dignity of faith and its simplicity; the errors which misrepresent and assail it; its nature; the magnificence of its effects; its necessity and eternity; and the mode of its preservation. It remains now to examine,

II. THE INTIMATE CONNEXION EXISTING BETWEEN THIS FAITH AND THE MISSIONARY EFFORTS OF THE CHURCH.

Having observed that this principle is the source of knowledge, and the parent of motives and feelings to the Christian, it is at once evident that the largeness or the narrowness of the knowledge thus gained, the weakness or the strength of the

feelings thus excited, and of the motives which are in this mode implanted, will constantly affect the character of all the Christian's doings, but especially those which depend most upon faith for their inception and completion—his doings in behalf of his impenitent fellow-men.

Upon the *enterprises* of the church, it is immediately apparent, whether the faith of the believers who compose that body is in a state of feebleness and declension, or of energy and growth. He who looks much to the parting commandment of his Lord for the universal proclamation of his truth, and much to the repeated assurance of his Lord that his truth shall prove itself mighty, and his word not return void, will be prepared to hope and to attempt much, in obedience to the commandment and in inheritance of the promise. He, on the contrary, who sees eternity but indistinctly, seldom and afar, and whose faith takes but short and occasional flights into the enduring world of realities that surrounds us, will be prone to exhibit in his plans timidity and despondency, in his efforts remissness and apathy. And if we look to the period when the limits of the church were most rapidly and widely extended, it will be found not the era when the worldly power, the learning and the wealth of the church were at their highest elevation, but in the age when, though lacking all these, by the energy of an overmastering faith, she rose superior to every impediment, and destitute of all earthly aid and encouragement, dared to hope in God. Wise in His wisdom, and strong in His might, she planned her plans of conquest upon the broad and magnificent basis of the Saviour's promises, and then, in humility, diligence, and simple devotion, called upon the Saviour's faithfulness to accomplish the plans His own word had warranted, and His own Spirit incited. And in most of the great revivals of faith and godliness in the modern church, it will be discovered that the rising flood of religious

feeling has opened anew, or found and followed the already open channel of missionary enterprise. The revival of religion granted to the early labors of the Puritan fathers in New-England, saw also the rise of Elliot and the Mayhews, the first evangelists of our Indians. The energetic faith of Wesley sought for its first field a mission to the savages of our southern coast. The era of Edwards, when the faith and love of the church received so wide and mighty an excitement, was also the era of Brainerd, his friend and disciple, a missionary of the rarest endowments. The revival of faith in Protestant Germany under Francke, Spener, and the Pietists, founded the Orphan House at Halle, and saw go forth from its walls Swartz and others, his associates, to labor amid the heathenism of India. The accession of strength to the faith of the Moravian brethren, by the labors of Zinzendorf, soon found an outlet in missionary enterprises of apostolical simplicity and successfulness. The established church of England, in her recent return to the faith of her early founders, has also been aroused to the cause of missions, and already rejoices in the record of her Heber, her Buchanan, and her Martyn. And in our own division of the Christian host, the energetic labors of the elder Hall, Fuller, and the younger Ryland, to restore to the faith of our churches its proper and practical character, were soon followed by the establishment of those missions, which have given, as we trust, an impulse to the energies of the church that shall go on, with greater extension and deepening intensity, until the time of the Messiah's second advent.

The same increased faith which excites the enterprise, serves withal to multiply the *resources* of the church for the successful development and prosecution of the plans she has formed. Consecration to God of our hearts and our substance will produce a liberality which would, to a lukewarm age, seem fanatical and extravagant. Living as in the constant view of

the last judgment; estranged from the world, and thus exempted from the various and costly sacrifices it requires to fashion, to pride, and to luxury; the conscientious frugality of the church would enable the poorest and the richest members to unite in habitual contribution. A simple-hearted faith would banish also from the confines of the church that pretended spirituality which anxiously excludes religion from the scenes of business, and shuts her out from all interference with pecuniary matters, under the pretext of guarding her sanctity, but in truth for the protection of a hidden covetousness. In the better and happier era of her history it is found that religion is a familiar and every-day guest, visiting not the chamber of social or secret prayer and the sanctuary only, but passing through all the scenes of human industry, and shedding over every occupation her mild and hallowing influence. Systematic contribution to every form of religious benevolence, will then be regarded as a necessary mark of true piety. But the chief treasures of the church are not her stores of silver and gold, but her living members, with their spiritual endowments of varied character and grades. And how greatly would a revival of primitive faith draw upon these her spiritual resources, for the supply of the perishing heathen. The missionary cause would not be considered as making well nigh its exclusive appeal to ministers of the church; but the merchant, the artisan, and the farmer, each anxious to give himself to the Lord's service, would present not a stinted tithe of his earnings, but himself, his personal labors, and his life, as an offering to the great work of evangelizing the heathen.

How evident and vast the increase of missionary power given to the church, in the influence of a purer and simpler faith upon her *doctrines*. We have viewed incidentally the errors that usurp the name of Christian faith. When these should have been outgrown and superseded by a true and

heartly acceptance of God's whole testimony, how immense the amount of moral power thrown into benevolent action. Again, even where true faith exists, it is now embarrassed in its operations by its union with more or less of error. Every admixture of human tradition, and each addition of extraneous and irrelevant authority, has served but to disfigure and weaken the truth it was intended to adorn. When these cumbrous appendages shall be relinquished, and the oracles of truth shall be consulted more habitually in prayer for the teachings of the Spirit, what may not be hoped from the blessing of that God who is jealous for the honor of His own word? What may not be hoped from the temper and edge of the sword of the Spirit, when it shall have been disencumbered of the scabbard, that has so long served only to conceal and corrode its brightness?

The transition is a natural one from the doctrines of the Gospel to the *motives* which they suggest and sustain. And much aid will have been won for urging onward the cause of the Saviour in heathen lands, when a higher standard of faith shall have trained up the church in greater simplicity of purpose, and in pure and single-hearted desire for the glory of God. How much effort is now lost to the world and the church, because polluted by motives which God cannot deign to bless. When this transparency of purpose shall become prevalent, how strong and general the tendency towards a cordial union of all Christians in the common cause. How much of the time and strength of brethren is now wasted upon unbrotherly divisions. Bigotry and partizanship are dividing those who should never have been sundered. And how much useful and needed power is now withheld, because its possessors are at present unwilling to bestow it, accompanied, as it would be, with an exposure of their personal inferiority. The talent being but one, they deem it but Christian modesty to enwrap and inter it. A faith which shall purge the heart of these base

and earth-born feelings, and make the motives of action necessarily more powerful, as they were more simple and pure, would evidently strengthen the aggressive energies of the church for her inroads upon the dominions of spiritual darkness.

The *force of pious example* in the Christian church, as influencing the world, is yet but scantily developed. But when there should prevail a general union amongst the disciples of our Lord, one of the most common topics of reproach, employed by the world, would be taken away. Affecting, also, as an increase of faith would do, the personal character of each member in the various divisions of the Christian church, what would be the influence of the resplendent and consistent holiness thus cherished, upon the families and dependants, the neighbors and friends of Christians. And this influence would be felt, not merely inviting their co-operation in the missionary alms of the church, but attracting and awakening them to inquiry and repentance, and drawing them into the same bonds of tender and heavenly brotherhood. How much of the reasoning and zeal and energy of the church is now wasted, because counteracted by the lukewarm remissness or the undisguised scandals exhibited in multitudes wearing the Christian name. And when a vigorous and wholesome faith should purify our churches; when the unhealthy and diseased portions should be seen sloughing away under the searching influence of Christian discipline, and the faithfulness of an evangelical ministry; and the church should shine forth in the healthful beauty and symmetry of holiness; what would be the boldness of her advocates, the power of her appeals, and the confusion of her enemies. And all these would be felt immediately in the fields of missionary labor; the Christian mariner, the Christian merchant, and the Christian traveller, would strengthen by a holy example, in the sight of the heathen, the hands of the Christian missionary.

But the most important advantage thus gained, for the cause of our Lord in unevangelized lands, would be the enlarged channel for the communication of the *Divine Influences*. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Great faith delights, as a weak and narrow faith dishonors and grieves Him. And when the thousands of Israel shall go up with the ardent though humble expectation of receiving an answer to their prayers, whilst the supplications of primitive faith should again ascend, who shall say that the wonders of the early church may not return; and men, in the spirit and power of the early believers, rise up to become the heralds of salvation to the most distant and most brutified tribes of mankind? Assuredly those who should honor Him by a childlike dependence, would be honored of Him. Then, as the early and the latter rain descended, and when the "fountains of the great deep" of moral power now unemployed, should be broken up from beneath in a wrestling church, and "the windows of heaven" be opened from above by a favoring God; how rapidly would the waters of salvation rise and swell and diffuse themselves, till the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth,

And like a sea of glory
It spread from pole to pole.

III. From this review of the possible and legitimate fruits of Christian faith, let us turn to its actual results in our midst, that we may learn

THE DEFICIENCIES IN OUR FAITH WHICH RETARD THE TRIUMPHS OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH OVER ITS ANTAGONIST ERRORS.

We are accustomed to look abroad to the mass of evil with which the Christian missionary must contend in heathen lands,

and to suppose that here are the chief obstacles to his success. The language of the text and the previous considerations brought before you, would lead to the conclusion that this is not the truth. Not in the gorgeous temples, and the costly images, and all the imposing pageantry of idolatry, by which he is environed ; not in the wiles and violence of an organized and interested priesthood ; not in the deep hold which a false religion has taken upon the arts, and customs, and literature, and every institution, political and social, of the nation ; not in any of these, nor in all of them united, is the most formidable resistance to his labors to be found. The stress of battle is in a remoter and unobserved portion of the field. His foes and his hindrances are rather to be sought in the land he has left, and in the very bosom of the church which has commissioned and despatched him. It is because their faith is not increased adequately to sustain him, that his heart languishes, and his soul is faint within him ; and while he calls upon the obstinate and besotted pagan before him to repent of his unbelief, he sends back over the intervening ocean, to the churches of his native land, an appeal not less earnest and yet more touching, that they too repent of the poverty and pettiness of their faith, and that they enlarge him in his labors according to the apostolic rule, and upon the primitive model.

The existence of such deficiencies in our faith is painfully evident, in the inadequacy of the *views* which that faith ministers, of the *external fruits* which it produces, and of the *internal spirit* which it breathes ; or in its influence upon the intellect, the conduct, and the affections.

1. The views with which their faith furnishes the majority of those attached to our churches, are then singularly inadequate with regard to the *miseries of the world*. Of the fearful condition of the vast mass of our race, the hundreds of millions ignorant or neglectful of the Gospel, we think little and inquire

still less. Of temporal suffering,—of the anguish which ignorance, vice, and unrestrained passion are working merely for this life, how immense is the amount; for gross darkness covers the nations, and the dark places of the earth are necessarily and ever full of the habitations of cruelty. How fatal is the influence upon human happiness, even for the few days of our earthly career, of vice not merely legalized, but sanctified and deified in the national idols, as we find it under every form of paganism. But what is even this, compared to the hopeless and unending woe into which death shall hurl the tribes of heathenism. And yet those, who thus, whilst groaning under present misery, work out fiercer sufferings for eternity, are our brethren, like us fallen and vicious, but like us immortal and accountable. Of this fearful wretchedness our perception is indistinct and transient. We have no deep and abiding conviction of the evil of sin, and the necessary misery of its captives.

There is equal deficiency in our views of the *promises of scripture*. How large a portion of prophecy is given to the glories of the Messiah's kingdom. They occupy a prominent room and large space in the brief form of supplication given by our Saviour to his disciples. Redolent as these promises are of the most delightful hopes, how seldom do we remember, and how faintly plead them; though the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of God's Son, the Gentiles shall be his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth are his assured possession.

Come then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy!—
The very spirit of the world is tired
Of its own taunting question, asked so long,
“Where is the promise of your Lord's approach?”

Come then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,
Due to thy last and most effectual work,
Thy word fulfilled, the conquest of a world.

Nor are our views more just and complete as to *our own obligations* and vows. Although our entrance upon the course of Christian profession was by devoting ourselves to the service of the Lord, and having given ourselves to Him, we gave ourselves into the church by His will; has not the dedication been forgotten, or practically revoked by too many of our number? The lights of the earth, we are shedding around but a dim, flickering, and uncertain lustre. The salt of the world, who has perceived in us the savor of Christian vitality?

But especially do our views assume the appearance of meagre insufficiency, in the estimate they afford of the *peculiar opportunities of the age* for Christian usefulness. "Ye hypocrites," exclaimed our Lord, "can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Are the larger number of Christians at all awake to the fact, that the signs of our times call upon the believers of the nineteenth century for unprecedented exertions? The advance of popular freedom and general education, the unrestrained commercial intercourse of nations, the wide-spread peace now enjoyed, the improved speed and lessened expense of travelling, the newly developed powers of the press, the powers each day more apparent of voluntary associations, the extensive and daily extending use of the language we have inherited from England, and which is now becoming intelligible in the chief maritime ports of the world—all require at the hands of American Christians no ordinary exertions. The daily enlargements of the mission field, and the success of truth's first onset upon the powers of darkness, are summoning us most impressively to action. The institutions of Hindooism, of such vaunted antiquity, and rooted in the veneration of

ages, seem already tottering to their overthrow, ere the generation are gone from the earth that first sapped their base. The barrier which long closed the vast empire of China is now found to be but the brittle seal of an imperial edict, unsustained by the national feelings. The word of GOD, as recently translated and published in languages never before taught the name of JEHOVAH, is calling for the living preacher to scatter and to interpret it. Amid all these omens of good and incentives to diligence, are we found awake to the fact, or conscious of the majesty and splendor of the scenes now opening? On the contrary, is not the church protracting her slumbers, while the whole heaven above her is reddening with the dawn of that day, which shall usher in her restoration and the redemption of all the earth?

But the most afflictive defect in our views, is the slight and irreverent estimate we form of our *Divine Ally*. The King of kings is our intercessor, the Omniscient Spirit is our teacher; and we are invited to counsel with Divine Wisdom, and to stay ourselves on the arm of Creative Power. Yet how do we narrow down the magnificence of the Divine promises, and compress the hopes, large and grand, offered by the gospel, into some petty and pitiful request, that, as we imagine, bespeaks Christian humility, but in truth displays contemptuous unbelief. What! when God is for us, is it not most guilty to hesitate and linger in minor and facile enterprises? What would have been thought of him whose memory we are wont to hail as the Father of his country, if, when joined by the fleets and army of our foreign ally, he had gathered the combined hosts to the siege of some petty barrack, garrisoned by a few disbanded invalids? The greatness of the GOD we serve, demands on our part a large and manly, a far-sighted and far-reaching faith.

2. The same odious discrepancy between its privileges and

doings, its powers and its results, is seen in the *external fruits* of our faith, or its influence upon the conduct. In the prayers of the church, as offered in her solemn assemblies, is there the due and earnest remembrance of the missionary laborer, who has, like Jonathan and his armor-bearer, clambered up into the high places of heathenism, and finds himself alone in the very midst of the enemy? In the Monthly Concert, that touching union which brings the Christians of every hue, and language and kindred into one assembly, and blends their hearts in the utterance of one petition, is the meeting maintained with that general and devout attendance demanded by the beauty of its conception and the grandeur of its object? Of the alms of the church—how pitiful the amount compared with the free and glad sacrifices made on the altars of dissipation and intemperance, in games of chance, in fashionable equipages, furniture, and dress, in the support of the theatre, the race-course, and the lottery, in the extravagance of our tables, and the sumptuousness of our homes. Of that which is given, how much is the niggardly parings of a plentiful income. We have begun by devoting to God the choicest of the herd and the firstlings of the flock; and have finished by laying on His altars but the offals of the victim. In our labors and our sacrifices for the cause of God, how rarely is found the noble disinterestedness, or the humble and retiring generosity that distinguished the faith of the primitive times. But, above all, is there not need of a wide and deep renovation throughout the mass of our churches, ere the standard of personal holiness can be deemed at all comparable with that which sprung from faith, as apostles preached it, and as its first confessors received it?

3. The *internal spirit* which it breathes, was spoken of as betraying a deficiency in the faith of modern believers. If love to man be the second great commandment of the scrip-

tures, is it sufficiently awakened within us, and in proportion to the dignity which revelation has thus assigned it? But in love to God, in anxiety for continued communion with Him, and deepening conformity to His image, in desire for the honor of His name, are we not verily guilty of a fearful deficiency, and needs not our faith immediate renovation and increase? Have we that intense fear and abhorrence of sin which a lively faith ever displays? The confidence of the faithful anciently inspired them with a holy and dauntless courage, as they faced and rebuked the world. Is ours thus operative? Theirs was a humility, which, springing from conscious weakness, clung the more closely to God, and amid the largest success, resigned to Him the undivided glory; is our faith thus lowly in its spirit and tendency? The voice of inspiration has said, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Is the faith, in the possession of which we exult, thus attended and verified? Have we been fashioned into his likeness and imbibed his temper? Is ours the life of cross-bearing and watchfulness and prayerfulness: if not, is it a life of discipleship to Christ—is it the race of faith, swift, direct, and onward: and shall it win at last the crown of the triumphant believer?

Church of the living God, is there not utterly a fault amongst us in this matter? And until our faith increase, can we hope that, according to the rule of Paul's apostolic labors, the destitute Gentiles should be evangelized? Is not an enlargement now demanded and now due in the labors, prayers, and alms, that go to sustain the cause of Christian missions; and what but the renovation of faith shall work that enlargement? Let us not contrast our sacrifices and zeal merely with those of the Master whose name we bear, and whom we have avouched as our great Exemplar: let us but measure our endeavors, in their number, and in the prudence, liberality, and perseverance that mark them, with the efforts and spirit of the men of this world,

who are without hope and without God. Yielding up the comforts of home, and the society of friends, forswearing ease, periling character, lavishing life, and venturing even upon eternal ruin, as they do, the walks of this world's business and of this world's pleasures are strewn with the voluntary and costly sacrifices of time, property, comfort, life, and salvation. But we, with a soul to save, a heaven to lose or win, a Christ to publish, and a God to serve,—how shamefully calm are we found, and timid and half-hearted. And this, while the world is rushing into ruin, and bearing on its swollen and rapid stream our friends, our neighbors, and our children;—while the earth which God has promised to bless, (and that by human instrumentality,) lies as yet, prostrate and groaning, under the curse poured out through all her coasts. The time is coming, and prophecy has foretold it, when in every land there shall be offered to God a pure offering,—when, from the closet and the sanctuary, from the hill-top, the field, and the forest-side, where the children of God shall, like Isaac, walk forth at eventide to meditate, the voice of pious supplication shall ascend in one continuous stream; until our globe, as it rolls along its orbit, shall seem but a censer revolving in the hand of the Great High Priest, and pouring out at every aperture a cloud, dense and rich, of incense, fragrant and grateful to God. But, as yet, the ascending cloud is one of far other kind. Its skirts are dark with sullen gloom, and its bosom is charged with indignation and vengeance. Wailing and blasphemy, oppression and outrage, pollution and falsehood, have swollen and blackened it; and with it, a cry goes up, like that from the cities of the plain, piercing the ear of God. Day unto day uttereth speech of human wretchedness, and night unto night sheweth knowledge of human wickedness. What has *our* faith, my brethren, done for its relief? What will be the fruits of our belief in the alms and the prayers now demanded; what

its share in the services of this assembly? Shall we not exclaim, reviewing the greatness of the task, on the one hand, and on the other the greatness of the guilt which has neglected it, as did the apostles, whilst their Lord was enjoining a duty alike necessary and difficult, "LORD INCREASE OUR FAITH."

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